How To Photograph Your Work For The SSA Annual Open Exhibition

Positioning Your Artwork

Prop or place your artwork in an upright position on a table against a neutral background such as a white wall, large piece of paper or curtain. Aim to get a soft even natural sunlight across the whole work by placing your work near a window or outdoors on a bright but overcast day. Harsh lighting will cast strong shadows and electric lighting may affect the colour of your work so try to avoid these. Also, look out for reflections on glass or other shiny surfaces (more on colour and reflections below).

If your work is not on a stretcher, in a frame or supported in some other way, and needs to lean against a wall, fix it to a temporary backing for the purposes of the photograph, or try placing it on the floor and shooting it from overhead (this will only work for small works).

If the table is pale in colour you may get too much light reflecting off it back onto your piece or colour reflections distorting the colours in your work. If this happens try putting a sheet of dark fabric or paper under the base to avoid this.

Positioning Your Camera

It is vital that you are able to keep your camera steady in order to ensure that your image is sharp, so place your camera on a tripod or flat surface.

If you are able, use the self-timer on your camera to avoid camera shake when pressing the button.

If your camera is on a tripod, make sure that you turn off the image stabilisation/vibration reduction (if you have this function), as it will reduce the sharpness of your image.

Make sure that your camera is tilted to match the angle of your work (is parallel to it), to ensure that the shape of the piece is not distorted, and that the centre of your lens is directly in line with the centre of the work. Some cameras have a grid overlay on the LCD screen that will help you with this.

To maximise the resolution of the image, only leave a small space around the outside of your artwork, just enough to allow for cropping out the background later.

Focusing Your Camera Lens

Most cameras offer an 'auto focus' option and this should be sufficient, however, if you are having difficulties getting the image in focus you may need to switch to 'manual focus'.

It's best not to use a wide-angle lens, as this may make the edges of the artwork appear curved or distorted.

If you are using an SLR or compact camera, zoom in tight to your artwork then focus, but if you are taking your photo using a mobile phone or digital tablet do not use the zoom function, as this will reduce the quality of your image. Instead move your camera closer to the artwork.

If you have this option on your camera, put your ISO to it's lowest setting (50, 100 or 200 depending on your camera model).

Correct Colour Balance and Unwanted Reflections

As you are using natural light, make sure any electric lights are turned off, as they will affect the tones in your work. Turn off the built-in flash and change your camera to the daylight if available.

If your artwork is framed under glass you may be best to remove it from the frame for the photograph to avoid reflections. However, if this is not possible, a polarising filter over your lense will help to reduce reflections.

Taking Several Shots, Including Different Angles, Close Up Details and Scale Information

You are able to add three images of each work (up to six for installation, film, performance and large scale work, though some of these might include sketches of proposed work or images of past works) so take several shots, including the full artwork (from several angles if three-dimensional), the full artwork with a recognisable object beside it to help the selectors envisage scale, and close up details. Keep checking them so that you can make adjustments to lighting, angles, reflections or focus if needs be. Check that all images are sharp and as true as possible to your artwork.

Before dismantling your setup and putting away your camera, check your photographs on your computer screen, as you may spot flaws that you could not see on the camera screen.

Scanning Your Small Work

It may be possible to use a scanner to copy your artwork to the computer, rather than having to photograph it, if your work is small enough with little or no surface texture and you have access to a good quality scanner.

Preparing Your Photograph For Upload

Download your images to your computer hard-drive and use photo-editing software to crop the artwork from the background. There are free photo editing packages such as Google Photos (Windows) and iPhoto (Mac). Zoom in and inspect the image for flaws. You may want to boost the contrast to bring out the details of your artwork, but do not over edit your image as you want it to be a true representation of your work.

Resizing your image for submission

The file size of your submitted images should not exceed 1MB and should be saved as a JPG. The resolution should be 72dpi and the image should be 1000 pixels on its longest edge.

There are plenty of free online tools in which you can resize images, such Google Photos and iPhoto mentioned above.

Remember to name your file with the artworks title but do not include any of the following characters: */:<>?\|%&$"!#

Once you are ready, Log In to www.s-s-a.oess.uk to upload your images.

This link will take you to the system the SSA has chosen to use for digital submissions on an external site. Members and non-members alike must register on this site completing ALL required fields to submit work.

After registration (step 1), you will be able to return at any time before the stated deadline to complete your application.

Please choose one of the following headings and click on ENTER:
OPEN EXHIBITION 2016 - INSTALLATION, FILM, PERFORMANCE AND LARGE SCALE WORK
OPEN EXHIBITION 2016 - ALL WORK UNDER 180CM

You will be asked to select this heading four times to enable the system to process your registration so please be patient and continue to select the same heading.

You can go through all the stages of adding artwork details and uploading images, without fully completing your submission, allowing you to return at a future date to make any necessary changes. It is only once you have **confirmed** your application that you will not be able to edit your details. Please do remember to **Preview** and **Confirm** your application before the deadline.

If you need help and assistance with your application please see The **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS** on our website at: www.s-s-a.org/digital-entry-2016 in the first instance. Should you still need assistance please email: admin@s-s-a.org.